



City of Seattle

Department of Planning and Development

Diane M. Sugimura, Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Councilmember Sally Clark, Chair, COBE
Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Councilmember Tim Burgess

FROM: Diane M. Sugimura

DATE: February 4, 2011

SUBJECT: Committee Briefing, February 9: DPD Monthly Report – Looking Forward

In Operations --

We're looking forward to a better year than 2010! Our biggest challenge for 2011 will be how we balance allocating our resources, providing good customer service while at the same time attempting to build our financial reserves. We are very thinly staffed and will need to be nimble to move review and inspection resources to areas of highest demand. We will attempt to meet customer demand for services such as coaching, but those are a secondary priority compared with applicants who have plans for real projects and are moving forward. We will also continue to work on business processes such as billing, cancellations and expiring permits – improving our systems, while working to meet customers' objectives when possible. Improvements in these processes allow us to focus on projects that are active and most in need of attention, and they increase accountability both on our part and on the part of our customers.

The construction permit picture ... in January of 2011, we accepted 460 building permit applications compared with 383 in 2010. The construction value of the applications was \$68.3 million this year compared to \$66.1 million last year. Perhaps a more telling story are with the permits being issued. In January we issued a similar number of building permits (453 compared with 445 in 2010), but the value of the issued permits was \$257.3 million this year compared to \$127.9 million last year.

In terms of initial review times (goal = 80%):

- 48 hour permits: 95%
- 2 week permits: 62% (88% within 3 weeks)
- 4 week, green SRC (residential): 100% (only one project)
- 6 week, green SBC (building): 100% (only on project!)
- 8 week permits: 81%



City of Seattle, Department of Planning and Development

700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000

P.O. Box 34019, Seattle, WA 98124-4019

An equal employment opportunity, affirmative action employer. Accommodations for people with disabilities provided upon request.

We accepted applications for 25 Master Use Permits (MUP) in January 2011, compared with 35 applications in 2010. We published 22 MUP decisions during the month; 76% met the 120 day target (goal = 80%). By 150 days, 93% of the decisions had been published.

In February, we will be expanding our E-Plan submittal and review process to everyone who signed up for the pilot and plan on making the process available to all applicants by the end of the third quarter. By the end of the year, we plan on having explored options and developed systems that will allow us to move to an entirely electronic system. This will save applicants trips downtown, simplify plans routing and save on paper. We also recognize that we will need to develop systems to accommodate one-time applicants who are not prepared for electronic submittal.

Staff have also been involved with reviewing the draft of the International Green Construction Code (IgCC), both regionally and nationally. We hosted a regional session, which included six agencies from Washington State, as well as a consultant who provided technical guidance and insight during the discussion. This team identified areas that either do not meet our regional sustainability goals or where language within this code may conflict with other local requirements. The group submitted recommendations as the “Cascade Collective.” In addition, DPD submitted more than 60 code change proposals from the City perspective.

Code Compliance Update

We have had three meetings with the stakeholder group to gather their input on rental housing licensing and inspection topics to respond to Resolution 31221. This is a 12-member group, invited to represent the viewpoint and concerns of landlords, tenants, the private home inspection industry and the broader community, including the Health Department, developers and providers of services, such as for low income residents. We kept the group small so that each participant has sufficient opportunity to express their concerns and their recommendations, and to facilitate a more in-depth discussion on the topics in the Resolution. Thank you for Council’s support so we could hire a facilitator ... this has been a great help.

We have set up a web site where stakeholders and interested members of the public have access to meeting agendas and notes, and a variety of background information that has been requested. <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Compliance/RentalHousing/Overview/default.asp>
We also reserve time at each stakeholder group meeting for public comment.

Under the Resolution, DPD was asked to report the status of this effort by February 1. However with the delayed start due to loss of staff, we will provide a status update later this month. The stakeholders will meet at least through the end of April and potentially through the end of May, if the additional time is necessary to complete their work.

The Code Compliance Division is in the process of making adjustments as a result of staff reductions, including the loss of a supervisory position and inspection staff, at the end of last year. Adjustments include reorganization of inspection districts and changes to district

assignments, redefining supervisory and lead roles. The most visible change will likely be how we respond to complaints about vegetation overgrowth. We will inspect vegetation complaints when the reported condition may pose a current hazard, such as when sight lines at intersections are impeded or when pedestrians cannot use a sidewalk. In most instances, when no potential hazard has been described, we will mail the property owner information about the nature of the complaint and the City requirements to keep public rights of way clear from overgrowth. When we have information that the property is vacant, we will mail this information to the taxpayer of record. Making this change will allow our limited inspection resources to be applied to potential hazards and higher priority complaints.

City Planning Work Program Highlights

Next month, we will present our first quarterly report on our City Planning Work Plan so we will have more opportunity to discuss these and other issues. Below is a high level summary of the main topics.

Comprehensive Plan Update: Update the Comprehensive Plan, continuing the basic concept of our current Plan, but focus on the values of sustainable communities, creating a simplified 21st century framework document integrated with Office of Sustainability and Environment's Climate Action Plan.

Neighborhood Planning: Complete three neighborhood plan updates in SE Seattle; initiate neighborhood plan updates in Rainier Beach and Broadview/Bitter Lake/Haller Lake neighborhoods, starting with a focus on coordinated infrastructure planning. The Neighborhood Advisory Committees in both neighborhoods have been working since last fall.

South Lake Union Urban Design Framework and EIS: Complete recommendations on development standards, design guidelines, capital planning and public amenities. Complete EIS addressing three specific height and density scenarios and prepare a preferred alternative for rezoning.

"Waterfront Seattle": Develop Central Waterfront concept design with the Central Waterfront Committee; oversee public outreach and reports to the Mayor and Council.

Shoreline Master Program Update: Comprehensive update to Seattle's Shoreline Program to preserve and enhance shoreline ecology while supporting essential maritime activities and expanding public access and enjoyment of Seattle's shoreline.

Capitol Hill Broadway Transit Oriented Development (TOD): Continue to work with the Capitol Hill community and Sound Transit on Sound Transit properties at Broadway and John streets; complete urban design framework in the 2nd quarter of 2011. Work will likely include amendments to the Land Use Code, possible rezones, or development agreements.

Yesler Terrace “Planned Action Community”: Complete entitlements proposal for large-scale phased redevelopment at Yesler Terrace.

Northgate: Conclude work on Northgate UDF and continue to coordinate large lot development opportunities. With federal Sustainable Communities Grant funding, develop a strategy for a TOD on the King County Metro Transit Center.

Center City Public Realm Strategy: Develop strategies and seek partnerships with City departments and private community organizations such as the Downtown Seattle Association, to advance projects that integrate and enhance public spaces throughout the Center City. (Recent examples include the development of Bell Street Park Boulevard in the heart of the Belltown neighborhood.)

Sustainable Development Policy: Develop an expanded policy for City buildings and sites that demonstrates the City’s commitment to addressing climate change, provides leadership in setting community green building standards, and provides responsible stewardship of the City’s fiscal resources and public assets over time.

Citywide Design Guidelines: Complete the first major update to the Citywide Design Guidelines that form the basis for the City’s design review process. Since the adoption of 19 neighborhood design guidelines, and experience with the program, much was learned and has been applied to update and improve both content and graphic character of the City’s design guidelines.

DPD Outreach – Into the New Year

In 2011 we will increase our use of social media – blogs, Facebook, and Twitter – in our community outreach for planning initiatives, and as a day to day way of keeping our customers and the public informed about our permitting and compliance procedures and regulations, and how they are changing. We are coordinating with SDOT and outside consultants on the launch and maintenance of a new WaterfrontSeattle.org website, with complimenting Facebook and Twitter accounts. In Neighborhood Planning, we will continue to support the Public Outreach Liaison work led by the Department of Neighborhoods, and are using lessons learned from that important work in developing our outreach plans for other initiatives, such as the Comprehensive Plan Update.

We have begun our website usability project. We often hear that we have a great deal of good information on the DPD website, but that it can be hard to navigate. We agree. We have about 25 external volunteers to “test drive” our website, performing specific tasks to see how well, or not, the website serves our public. We are testing people who have some interest in our permitting, long-range planning, or code compliance work, and are working with frequent, occasional and infrequent of one-time users. While the volunteers are performing the tasks, project staff are in a separate room watching the screen, and the volunteers, recording their comments and frustrations. The volunteers know they are being studied and we appreciate their willingness to go through this, without compensation, to help us design a more user-friendly website.

By mid-year recommendations will be completed by the project team (all DPD staff). A benefit analysis of proposed changes will be developed, and we will look for ways to implement changes.

Upcoming Public Meetings:

- West Seattle Triangle Planning: February 7
- South Lake Union Urban Design Framework Celebration: February 8
- Waterfront Seattle: Presentation by James Corner Field Operations at Seattle Aquarium February 17
- Multifamily Zoning Training: Public Workshops in March
- Neighborhood Plan Updates for Rainier Beach and Broadview/Bitter Lake/Haller Lake: March meetings
- Comprehensive Plan Update: April

Looking Forward with RSJI

The City's external focus will be addressed by having each manager or supervisor be responsible for assessing a program, policy or process in their work area using the RSJI Equity Toolkit. Once assessment is complete, manager/supervisor will prepare a report explaining how they plan to implement changes to reduce institutional racism OR use the assessment to document a best practice that can be submitted to SOCR for inclusion in the citywide best practices website.

Last year the DPD RSJI Workforce Equity committee revised the DPD hiring process. This year the process will be finalized and implemented. The revised process mandates that screening and interview committee members be trained prior to participation – training will include RSJI Core subjects, and hiring and interviewing best practices.